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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

PHILOLEXIAN SOCIETY,

Columbia College,

MAY 17th, 1840;

BEING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOCIETY;

BENJAMIN I. HAIGHT, A. M.

Rector of All Saints' Church, New-York.

NEW-YORK:

1840





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COLUMBIA COLLEGE,
May 22d, 1840. }

At a meeting of the PHILOLEXIAN SOCIETY of Columbia College, held May 22d, 1840, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the warmest thanks of this Society be tendered to the Rev. Mr. HAIGHT, for the able and eloquent oration delivered before them at their late anniversary.

Resolved, That the Rev. Mr. HAIGHT be respectfully requested to furnish a copy of his oration for publication, and that a Committee of three be appointed to wait on Mr. Haight for that purpose.

Resolved, That Messrs. Van Voorhis, Romaine, and Parmly, constitute that Committee.

[Copy.]

GEORGE L. NEWTON,

Secretary.

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TO

REV. ROBERT WILLIAM HARRIS, A. M.

THIS ADDRESS

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY HIS

FRIEND AND BROTHER,

THE AUTHOR.



A D D R E S S.

GENTLEMEN OF THE PHILOLEXIAN SOCIETY :

Standing before you, and this respected audience this evening, by your kind invitation—an honor of which I am deeply sensible, and to which I feel that I am little entitled, except as an affectionate son of our Alma Mater, and as an honorary member of your body—my thoughts are involuntarily, yet powerfully carried back to other days, when, under far different circumstances, I stood with my fellow students beneath this roof. The scenes of college life are re-produced with no ordinary vividness upon memory's tablet. The hopes, the fears, the aspirations, the enjoyments, the privileges of that most interesting and important period of one's life, crowd upon the mind. Again do I warmly greet my companions and friends. Again do I hear the well known sound of the bell, summoning us to chapel or the lecture room, and again experience something of those mingled feelings which the thought of possible or probable failure in the duties of the day always excited, as the first stroke of that bell fell upon the ear. Again do I listen to the oracles of God, and the solemn words of prayer, within these sacred walls. Again do I sit by the table, with the volume of Grecian or Roman eloquence or poetry in my hand ; or stand by the black board and follow the mathematician of Alexandria in his demonstrations ; or

with pencil and paper in hand, am ready to take notes as the treasures of moral and physical science are unfolded to our view. And again do I enter our society room, as the studies and labors of the week are over, and prepare to take part in its inspiring and improving exercises.

Yes ! these were happy days, never to be forgotten. With all their toils and trials—and these they had, as every collegian knows—they were happy days; and while memory lasts, the recollection of their pleasures, the affection of companions, the kindness and care of instructors, and the multitude of minor matters which went to heighten the beauty of the scenes amid which we then walked, will not fade away.

“ *Hæc olim meminisse juvabit.*”

With such thoughts crowding in upon the mind of your speaker, on an occasion like the present, it cannot be otherwise than natural and proper to give them utterance. If to any who hear me they should seem to be too trivial to be mentioned, sure I am, that they will not be so regarded by those whose privilege it was, in the early years of life, to tread these classic halls.

As I thus, gentlemen, recall the incidents of past days, and dwell in thought upon the friends with whom I was then associated, and especially those who were fellow members of the Philolexian Society, my mind rests upon one who here highly distinguished himself as a scholar, and who was respected and beloved by all who knew him ; but who, 'ere he had entered upon the active duties of life, was laid low by the arrow of death. I allude to WALTER NICHOLS, who gradu-

ated with the highest honors of the institution, in the year 1825 ; and who was in every respect one of the noblest sons of this college.* Though my senior in years, and in collegiate life, it was my privilege to enjoy his acquaintance and his friendship ; and never shall I forget the morning when, as I passed beneath the ancient sycamores, in front of this building, thinking of the meeting of our society in the evening—the first in the session—and that I should then again greet my friend, who was at that time its President, I was told that he had been removed to another world. Rarely have such tidings filled so many hearts with deepest sorrow. Rarely does the king of terrors snatch from life one so well fitted to adorn it; not only by talents and attainments, but by every virtue. As we thus stand by the tomb where youth and excellence lie buried, and drop the tear of friendship, we are almost led to utter the plaint of the poet :

O, sir, the good die first,
While they whose hearts are hard as summer's dust,
Burn to the socket.†

But as the friends and scenes of that period pass in review, I look upon the form of our beloved President, the REV. DR. HARRIS, who now rests from his labors. The whitened locks of that venerable man ; his placid smile ; his silvery voice ; his courteous and quiet manners ; his unaffected dignity ; his high moral worth ; are well known to very many of those who hear me : and not a few, I am persuaded, remember them with filial affection and reverence. I had the happiness and the honor to belong to the last senior class which gradu-

* Note A.

† Wordsworth.

ated under his presidency, and enjoyed in common with a number of my classmates, his warm friendship. Hence I shall be pardoned, if in speaking of his character, I shall seem to those who never sustained to him a similar relation, to use language too strong and glowing.

Often have I dwelt upon the hours which, as seniors, we passed in his room. We were not there as students, but rather as sons around an aged father, listening to his affectionate counsels. And well do I remember our last interview with him as a class. We went in to receive his closing instructions. He began to impart them; he alluded to the occasion; his voice trembled; his feelings entirely overcame him, and all he could utter was, "My sons, God bless you!"

In a few months I watched by his lifeless corpse; and with many who honored and loved him followed him to the tomb. His end was that of the good man,—peace.

How calm his exit!
Night dews fall not more gently to the ground,
Nor weary worn out winds expire so soft.*

But though dead he lives. He lives in the hearts of his pupils and friends; he lives in the annals of literature and religion; and far more than all, and far better than all, he lives in the world of purity and bliss, never more to die.

The life of the late president of this college, affords a striking instance of the great value, and high power of moral worth. The testimony once borne by the Savior of the world to Nathaniel, was with great propriety and beauty applied to him by the friend† who pronounced his funeral sermon: "An

* Blair.

† Rev. Dr. M'Vickar.

Israelite indeed in whom is no guile." DR. HARRIS was emphatically a good man. His purity, his integrity, his conscientiousness, his benevolence—I use the word in its highest sense—stood forth so prominently, that the eye of the observer rested upon these, almost to the neglect of his other qualities. He was a scholar, a poet, and a divine; and yet it was not as these that he was known, nor is it as these that he is remembered, so much as the man of high moral and Christian principle and purpose; the man of probity, of virtue; over all which was thrown the beauteous mantle of charity. Hence it was that he acquired so great an influence over those brought within his sphere. His pupils could not but love and respect him, and were insensibly lead to submit to his guidance. A striking instance in illustration and confirmation of this occurs to my mind. One of the classes, acting under the influence of excited feeling, growing out of some imagined wrong done to certain members of their body, resolved not to attend the lectures of one of the professors; and accordingly, when the hour arrived, left the green, and went to their homes. This event broke in upon the quiet of our college life, and occasioned no little excitement. All were wondering what steps would be taken by the Faculty, and what would be the issue. The next day when the hour arrived, as the bell struck, the president was seen standing upon the steps, uncovered, his silver locks waving in the breeze, silently and intently looking upon the groups of students as they came out from their several rooms and stood beneath the trees. The refractory class hesitated; but it was only for a moment, and then to a man,

if my memory serves me, they turned and went to their duty.*

Now it is well for us, gentlemen, to contemplate a character like this. It is attractive in itself; and in any age, and under any circumstances, would suggest many important points of instruction. But in an age like ours, marked by so many peculiar characteristics, it cannot be too closely scanned, nor can the lessons which it utters be too carefully treasured up. It is the temper of the age in which we live to idolize mere talent; to set a value altogether too high upon bare intellectual power; and proportionably to depreciate other qualities of the mind and heart. Men crave distinction, and seek eagerly for power, and too often are regardless of the means, so they can but secure the end. And such distinction and influence is sought, not that thereby they may confer greater benefits upon society, but for its own sake, and the paltry, selfish gratification which it is thought to impart. Wealth is an important auxiliary, when this is the object which the soul longs to attain; and hence it becomes invested with new lustre, and acts upon the affections and the will like the magnet upon the iron. Powerfully are they drawn towards it. Ardently do they covet it; and no means of adding to its stores is left untried.

Now it is exceedingly difficult to live in such an age and not imbibe too much of its spirit. It is exceedingly difficult not thus to estimate mere vigor of mind, intellectual powers, the flights of genius, and the ability to control and regulate

* Note B.

the opinions and practices of our fellow-citizens ; and with such an estimate of these qualities, and the results to the accomplishment of which they are employed, not to bend all our energies to their attainment and improvement, and so to lose sight entirely of other most important features of our mental and moral nature, and to forget the true end of life. The world around, the great mass of men, under the influence of those who are styled and regarded as the wisest and the greatest, are judging by one standard, are hurrying on in one path. To set up another standard, to mark out and to pursue another path, is far from being an easy task ; and but few are found who have the courage to attempt it, still fewer who have the perseverance, having attempted it, to go steadily forward. It does require more than ordinary wisdom and firmness, to look to the less shining qualities, as the more desirable, and to strive for their attainment, rather than for those which are more brilliant, and more generally admired ; and while sedulously cultivating all one's talents, improving every faculty, storing the mind with the truths and facts of science, sharpening and improving its powers by every proper mode, paying all due homage to learning and genius, at the same time to aim steadily at the firm establishment and vigorous development of moral principle within ; to make the securing of this an object of paramount importance ; to reverence supremely, and most closely to follow after that which is good ; always to ask, and to ask fearlessly, What is Duty ? and then, though feeling, and present interest, and popularity, yea, all that the world so highly prizes, should oppose, to do it ; to pursue such a course, I say, is not easy. Our judgments may

decide in the hour of quiet and sober reflection that it is the true course, and we may resolve that it shall be ours. But when we again enter the world, and begin to put our principles into practice, we find it an almost Herculean task, and too often abandon it in despair.

The difficulty of forming and acting upon sound and correct views as to these things, is very much increased, and especially in the case of the young man just setting out in life, by the prejudice so widely extended and so deeply rooted in the world of literature and politics, and in the world generally, against laying stress on the supreme importance of high moral and religious principle, and of a course of life strictly conformable thereto, as if there were something in this adverse, or at least not favorable to high attainment and high distinction as a scholar or a statesmen, or even as a man of business. It is too common a sentiment that the man of purity, of devotion, of piety, is ordinarily a man of less grasp and vigor of mind, of less intellectual refinement and polish, of less learning and genius, than the man who lays no particular claim to such qualities. There has been, and there still is, a feeling abroad in society, as if religion in the scholar, or in the man in public life—where it is anything more than a mere name—is the index, if not of mental weakness, yet of the want of those higher qualities which give influence and renown in the circle of letters and politics, and is a decided obstacle in the way of the attainment of those qualifications, which give men a high rank now among their fellows, and which would hand down their names to posterity covered with glory. And many a young man has felt most powerfully the

effect of this sentiment in drawing him aside from the path which an enlightened conscience pointed out to him as the one in which he ought to walk, and in leading him to look at life, its duties and responsibilities, through a deceptive and bewildering medium.

But the sentiment, though so common, and unhappily so potent in its influence, is, I am bold to say, wholly without foundation, either in reason or in fact. Upon what ground can it be asserted that conscientiousness, virtue, in a word, **RELIGION**, not as an abstract, but as a living, operative principle, is in any respect unfavorable to the cultivation and development of the highest powers of the human mind ? What is there in religion thus viewed, which must be regarded as the antagonist of genius, talent, eloquence or learning ? For one I confess my utter inability to perceive any, even the least shadow of support for such a sentiment. What is religion ? I use the term in its highest sense, as comprehending the eternal principles of truth and purity, and their habitual, constraining influence upon the affections, the will, and the actions of man. What, I ask, is religion ? It is that which teaches man the right use of all the talents with which the Creator has endowed him, whether of the intellect, the heart, or the outward life. It is that which supplies to man the incentive and the power, knowing the right use of his talents, so to employ them. It is that which lifts man above the dominion of sensual appetite, of low and base desire, of ignoble passions, and by which he always walks in the bright and glorious path of reason, and faith, and duty. It is that which gives dignity to the soul ; which assimilates it to a higher nature than now

belongs to this earth ; and which brings all the various powers of man into harmonious action, and guards against the undue ascendancy or depression of any one of them, or of any particular class of them. Under its hallowed influence, the affections of the heart—the moral feelings—and the intellectual powers, ever move on in beauteous concord, mutually aiding and assisting each other ; like brother and sister, knit together in truest affection, the one shedding a mild, softening, mellowing influence upon the other, and receiving in her turn dignity and strength. Now if this be true, then surely they judge most erroneously who think that religion fetters the mind, cramps genius, or is in anywise an obstacle to the loftiest flights, the most profound researches, and the widest ranges of the human intellect. So far from this, he who would be truly wise, truly learned, truly great ; he who would climb the loftiest peak upon the hill of science ; he who would bring out all the powers of his inner nature into the fullest exercise of which they are capable, and effect all that man can effect for his own elevation and that of his race, as men, not creatures of sense and time, but beings of a spiritual, an immortal nature ; he who would do this ; he who would perform these truly noble feats, must begin in the school of heavenly virtue, and submit himself, at all times, implicitly to her guidance.

High worth is elevated place :

* * * * *

Makes more than monarchs, makes an honest man.

Tho' no exchequer it commands, 'tis wealth,

And tho' it wears no riband, 'tis renown ;

Renown that would not quit thee, tho' disgraced,

Nor leave thee pendent on a master's smile. *

* Young.

The truth of all this was clearly seen, and deeply felt, even by the sages of heathen Greece and Rome; men to whose intellectual stature few ever aspire, and still fewer ever reach. How frequently and in what strong terms do Pythagoras, and Socrates, and Plato, with their illustrious compeers, discourse upon virtue as an essential pre-requisite to high attainments in philosophy, and as indispensable to true greatness. So much stress, indeed, did they lay upon this point, that they required a preparatory discipline of fasting and silence in such as desired to enter their schools, and ascend to the heights of their mysteries. The feelings of these ancient sages is embodied in the strong language of Quintilian, as to the true orator: "Neque enim tantum id dico, eum, qui sit orator, virum bonum esse oportere: sed ne futurum quidem oratorem, nisi **VIRUM BONUM.**"*

Nor is this mere speculation and theory. These are principles which have often, in the history of the world, been carried out into practice; and the results remain for our instruction and encouragement. Do you ask me to point them out? With reverence then do I first turn to the most ancient volume which we possess, the Bible. I do not now speak of that book as an inspired volume. I do not look at the men who wrote it as guided and instructed by a superhuman power; but I view them as men and as sages, and their writings as human compositions merely; and I ask what is the character of those writings? What rank shall be assigned to their history, their poetry, their philosophy, their morals. Where in the list of the ornaments of our race shall we place Moses, and David,

* Lib. 12: 1.

and Solomon, and Isaiah, and Paul? These questions I prefer to answer in the words of one who, within these halls of literature and science, will be accounted high authority; of one who for rich intellectual endowments, and rare and varied attainments, has seldom been equalled, and scarcely, if ever, surpassed; I mean that illustrious scholar, Sir William Jones. "I have," says this truly great man, "carefully and regularly perused the Scriptures, and am of opinion, that this volume, independent of its divine origin, contains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may have been written." Let me add the testimony of the accomplished Frederick Sclegel. Of the Book of Job this distinguished scholar says: "it is a piece of writing which, considered merely as such, is without doubt one of the most characteristic and sublime which has come down to us from the ancient world." In the same light does he view the Psalms of David, the Allegories of Solomon, and the Prophecies of Isaiah. Speaking of the faith and confidence in God which were the inheritance of the Jews, he says of these works: "that they set them forth with a splendor and a sublimity, which considered merely as poetry, excite our wonder, and disdain all comparison with any other composition. They form a fountain of fiery and godlike inspiration, of which the greatest of modern poets have never been weary of drinking, which has suggested to them their noblest images, and animated them for their most magnificent flights."*

* Lectures on the History of Literature. 1: 190.

Such is the testimony—and many more illustrious names might be cited to the same effect—of genius and learning to the pre-eminent beauty and sublimity of the sacred writings, considered merely as *writings*. Now what was the character of the men by whom these lofty strains of poetry, and philosophy, and eloquence were penned? What were the subjects which filled and elevated their minds? What were the principles and motives by which they were governed? Were they mere worldlings? Did they look solely, or mainly, to this present state of being? Did they regard the powers of the mind apart from Him by whom they were given, and the great ends for which the Creator gave them? Were they fearful of the clogging, depressing effect of high moral and religious principle and aim upon talent and attainment? Far, far otherwise. The fount whence they sought, and whence they drank in their inspiration was on the mount of **HEAVEN**. They plumed their wings and soared aloft, and lighted their torch at the sun. They mused and discoursed of “**DIVINE Philosophy**;” and as they were thus engaged, every power and faculty of the soul was aroused, animated and strengthened; and thoughts and emotions almost too big for utterance struggled within them; and when they poured them forth, it was in strains of surpassing sweetness and power. O tell not then, of **RELIGION**, that she is inimical or even unfriendly to mental development, or in any way fetters the exercise of intellectual power. She is the hand-maid, the friend, the guide, the source of all that is valuable, all that is great, all that is beautiful in the region of mind.

But let us turn from men who held a station so peculiar and favored as the writers of the Holy Volume, and whose case, on that account, with some, may seem to be less in point in the matter before us. We leave then the sacred writers, and ask whether, in the world of literature and science generally, we find any proof and illustration of the ground which has been taken as to the perfect compatibility of the loftiest flights of genius, and the highest exertions of intellectual power, with the most uncompromising adherence, and the most devoted attachment to high moral and religious principle ; nay, the decidedly favorable influence of the latter upon the former. I thus enter upon a wide field, where the chief difficulty is in the selection of materials, and in avoiding a wearisome length of discussion.

What then is the result of a careful observation and study of the history—the intellectual, literary and political history—of society ? Who are the really great and distinguished men ? Who are they who have left their impress deeply upon their times, and whose influence has been felt long after their bodies have mouldered into dust ? Who are they who have given tone to the age ; who have guided and influenced the minds of their associates ; who have been respected, and honored, and beloved ; upon whose grave the tear of gratitude has dropped from many an eye, and around whose memory the bright halo of undying fame has gathered ? Who are they who have instructed, and delighted, and improved mankind ; bestowed upon them the most valuable gifts ; and who are now, and ever will be, remembered as earth's noblest sons ? I answer, they are the men who, with varied powers, and in

different spheres, and under widely different circumstances, were yet the men who, in the words of “the great meditative poet of the age,”

—“seeking faith by virtue strove
To yield entire submission to the law
Of CONSCIENCE; Conscience reverenced and obeyed,
As God’s most intimate presence in the soul,
And his most perfect image in the world.”*

And as I thus answer, all history and observation loudly echo back my words. I do not deny that there have been celebrated men who were destitute of moral excellence; men of letters and genius, men who swayed a mighty influence during their lives, and whose names have been handed down with glory to after generations, who were yet the slaves of appetite, and the votaries of sense; whose glory was in their shame. I am aware that a long catalogue may be produced of men of great parts and splendid abilities; of men who have astonished and delighted mankind by their words and deeds, who were not obedient to the law of conscience, and who did not walk in the path of virtue. Still, to each and every one of their achievements, admitting for them all that can possibly be claimed, a parallel is to be found in the chronicles which records the deeds of the good. Great as may have been the irreligious and the vicious, the virtuous and the pious have been equally so, judging by any standard which you may select. No splendid achievement of the former, it matters not what may be its character, can be mentioned, for which a counterpart cannot at once be found among the ac-

* Wordsworth.

tions of the latter. I take this ground distinctly, and maintain that among the greatest and most illustrious names, including all that any choose so to regard, in letters, in science, in the arts, in public life, are to be found those whose motives, whose aims, whose actions, were all heavenly in their nature,—sons of virtue and religion. But this is not all. Bring the lives and actions of men to the true standard. Ask what is really great; what is indeed sublime and beautiful, in conception and performance? Inquire what is the nature of that influence, of that reputation, of that fame which is valuable and lasting? Take enlarged, philosophic views of these subjects, and to what conclusion are we irresistibly impelled? Certainly to this; that none but the characters which I have just described, are to be accounted truly great, and worthy of all honor and imitation; such characters as the annals of the past present to us again and again; characters in which loveliness and grandeur are blended together in wondrous harmony.

“Learning has borne such fruit in other days
In all her branches: piety has found
Friends in the friends of science, and true prayer
Has flowed from lips, wet with Castalian dews.”

What a host of distinguished worthies spring forth at the summons of the Genius of History! What a long array of names distinguished in every department of life, does she present to us as humble worshipers at the altar of God, and in whose thoughts religion held the highest place! As we turn over her pages, our eye rests upon mighty monarchs, sagacious statesmen, profound scholars, gallant soldiers, eloquent advocates, mellifluous poets, and philosophers worthy

of the name, all of whom are bright examples of piety and virtue. We listen to her story of kings and princes, such as Alfred, and Edward, and Isabella;—of heroes and statesmen, such as Coligny, and De Mornay, and Hale, and Wilberforce;—of the votaries of science, like Boyle, and Boerhaave, and Kepler, and Newton;—of the sons of song, like Milton, and Cowper;—and of scholars, like Pascal and Butler.

But why do I refer to the men of other climes, and of days long past? It is the privilege of the American citizen, in the short history of his country, to read of many a noble spirit, and of many a noble deed; to read of rulers, and statesmen, and warriors, and scholars, whose names awaken the sentiments of reverence and love, not only in our breasts, but throughout the civilized world. And how strong is the testimony which that history gives to the truth of our position in regard to the intimate, the indissoluble connection between high moral principle and true greatness. This is a striking feature of our national history, and one which every true-hearted American rejoices to contemplate.

The immortal WASHINGTON! great in the cabinet; great in the field; great in his power over the hearts of men; the father of his country; whose name always sends a thrill of pleasure and gratitude through the soul, and which ages yet unborn, will remember as synonymous with all that is excellent and noble;—what were his sentiments, and what his course as to religion. I need not answer the question. He is enshrined in every heart, not only as Washington the great, but as Washington the good.

Among the illustrious associates of that wonderful man, stands one pre-eminent in mind, in wisdom, in sagacity ; to whom all do homage ; and whom, as sons of this state and of this college we have the honor to claim as our own. At the name of JOHN JAY, what emotions of respect, and admiration, and love, fill the mind. There was indeed in him, a rare assemblage of those qualities which elevate our nature. He stands high in the temple of his country's fame, and all, with one consent, acknowledge that *there* he deserves to stand. And what was his estimate of religion ? Let his own tranquil course, as a meek follower, a devoted disciple of the lowly Jesus, answer. Seldom has the flame of true piety burnt brighter than upon the altar of his heart. Seldom have men looked upon a more consistent Christian. From early childhood have I dwelt upon his lovely and exalted character, with sentiments of the profoundest reverence ; and while life and reason last, will his name stand before me as the symbol of the highest qualities which belong to man. To his country his life is a precious legacy. Well will it be for her if she value it aright, and if his mantle fall upon those who sit at her councils and preside over her affairs.

I might go on, and from the pages of American history bring many more illustrations. I might point you to the late Chief Justice of the land, JOHN MARSHALL, eminent as a scholar, a jurist, and a statesman, and no less eminent for his virtue and piety. And were I to add the name of WILLIAM WHITE, "clarum et venerabile nomen," the patriarch of the American Church, I should do no more than pay a just tri-

L. of C.

bute to sound learning, high scholarship, unconquerable patriotism, remarkable wisdom, and pre-eminent purity.

If I shall be thought to have extended my remarks upon this point too widely, and to have gone into an unnecessary minuteness of detail in my illustrations, I can only plead the importance of the subject, the strength of the prejudice which I have been combating, and the formidable obstacles which it places in the pathway of those who are about entering upon the active duties of life. It is all important that we start right in the world ; that our principles and our aim be such as will the most surely minister to our own happiness and welfare, and that of society. And he who gives to others any assistance herein ; who removes any obstruction from the road, be it ever so small, and be it done ever so awkwardly, performs an act of the truest kindness.

I will not leave this part of my subject without reminding my hearers, in all reverence, of the confirmation which is given to the truth of the sentiments which I have advanced, in the life and character of the SAVIOR of the world. This is not the place in which to treat of this high theme. The bare allusion to it may suffice. No man can contemplate that character ; can scan the actions of that life ; can listen to his words of celestial wisdom ; can witness his magnanimity, his benevolence, his courage, his love, and not feel his soul stirred within him in amazement and awe. Happy is it for us if we stop not here, but are led on to love, to imitate, and to adore.

I cannot be misunderstood, I think, in anything which I have now said, as if I would deprecate intellectual power, or cast any slur upon the attainments of the scholar. Far from

it. Who can listen to the outpourings of genius, the rich melody of poetic song, the powerful appeals of the sons of eloquence, or the bewitching stories of by-gone days, and not freely own their power, and honor and admire the fount whence they had their being. But as I do this, I would in return say to those who have been thus gifted above their fellow men, in the words of one of the sweetest poets of our day :

“ Ye whose hearts are beating high
 With the pulse of Poesy,
 Heirs of more than royal race,
 Framed by heaven’s peculiar grace,
 (If the word be not too bold)
 Giving virtue a new birth,
 And a life that ne’er grows old—

 Sovereign masters of all hearts!
 Know ye who hath set your parts?
 He who gave you breath to sing,
 By whose strength ye sweep the string,
 He hath chosen you to lead
 His hosannas here below;—
 Mount and claim your glorious meed;
 Linger not with sin and woe.” *

And as to scholarship, it would indeed be strange, if one trained up in these halls should fail to appreciate its importance, or should be backward in stimulating himself and others to attain to the highest measure of it within our reach. According to my poor abilities, I shall ever insist upon the great value of sound and thorough scholarship, and aim to promote its growth. And I would now summon every young man who hears me to the duty of laying broad and deep its foun-

* Keble.

dations, and not to rest satisfied until he sees the solid and beautiful superstructure of learning worthy of the name, raised thereon.

Still, however, the most refined and accomplished scholar; the man of the most profound research and most varied attainments; the man who, aided by nature and education, and fortune, and circumstances, rises to the very pinnacle of influence and renown; who, as yet, has not high moral principle as his polar star; who wears not the mantle of Christian virtue, wants his crowning lustre. The edifice, though of fair and stately proportions, is yet without its most beautiful and valuable ornaments; or rather is without any solid foundation. As sings the immortal Milton:

“This is true glory and renown, when God,
Looking on the earth with approbation, marks
The just man, and divulges him thro’ heaven
To all his angels, who with true applause
Recount his praise.”

Or in the language of that wonderful sage of Athens, almost inspired: “They who know not what is beautiful, and good, and right, are SLAVES.”

I have thus, gentlemen of the Philolexian Society, laid before you a subject of exceeding interest and moment to all, and especially to every young American. I have presented it as it arose to my own mind upon the contemplation of the character of the honored servant of God who presided over this College during the years of my academic life. If, in so doing, I have failed to awaken in your hearts a deep sense of its importance, and the ardent desire, and the strong determin-

ation that its salutary lessons may not be forgotten, let me beg you to impute it not to my theme, but to the feeble powers of the speaker, and the imperfect manner in which he has discharged his duty. Perhaps you will consider the exceeding shortness of the time allotted me for preparation, and the varied and weighty duties and cares of the pastoral office—which leave, at the best, but a few scattered moments for literary pursuits—as a sufficient apology for the numerous defects of my performance. Gladly would I have resigned the duty to other hands; but a summons from these groves to a true hearted son of our Alma Mater is like a request of a beloved parent, or the dearest bosom friend. To hear is to obey.

Let me then, gentlemen of the Society, in bringing these remarks to a close, call your attention to the position which you occupy, preparing, as you now are, under the guidance of the able, experienced, and learned Faculty of this Institution, for your entrance upon the public duties of life in this young but mighty nation.

You are now to consider and make choice of the principles by which you will guide yourselves when you leave these quiet retreats and mingle with men. Two ways are before you; the way of duty, and the way of expediency: the way illumined by the bright and cheering rays of celestial truth, and that upon which falls the lurid glare of error, sensuality, and selfishness. The one will conduct you to usefulness, to happiness, to honor: the other, though it winds through meads which to the eye are profusely decked with beauteous flowers, and which seems to lead up to bright and glorious regions, will yet most assuredly bring you to misery and

shame. Nor is this all. In your wrong choice, in your fatal wanderings, your country suffers. Upon what does the fabric of her institutions rest? Upon the virtue and intelligence of her sons. If this be wanting, then that proud fabric will fall. It may be adorned, and beautified, and gilded by wealth, and prosperity, and pleasure: wit, and eloquence, and poesy, yea pomp, and circumstance, and power, all may there find a home; still that fabric rests only upon the shifting sand, and ere long it will totter and fall. That fall, young gentlemen, you will accelerate unless you go forth hence clad in the panoply of virtue. Bear with you the treasures of knowledge and science; take with you the well tempered sword of learning; wield that sword wisely and bravely; meet manfully the duties of life; give to your varied pursuits the best energies of your minds; whatever you undertake aim high; but above all wear next your heart, yea wear *within* your heart, the jewel of religion.

πάντων δέ μάλισ αἰσχυνέο σαυτον.

Let reverence of thyself thy thoughts control,
And guard THE SACRED TEMPLE OF THY SOUL.*

Then, by the blessing of heaven, you will share in the praiseworthy exertions, and the glorious rewards of those who have done their country good service; who have put off her evil day; and who have, perhaps—God grant it!—secured her peace and perpetuity.

* Pythagoras; Golden Verses.



N O T E S.

[NOTE A.]

On the decease of Mr. Nichols, a small volume of his Essays and Letters was printed for private circulation among his friends. To this was prefixed a short biographical notice by one who had the best opportunity of judging of his character, and which may well find a place here.

" His talents were indeed of no ordinary grade, and his application in the pursuit of Literature and Science, to which he was zealously attached, intense. Modest and unassuming, few of his acquaintances knew his worth; and even his most intimate friends, previous to his decease, had no adequate conception of the extent of his mental powers, and the excellence of his heart. He gave early indications of a superior mind, and showed so decided a preference for literary pursuits, that he was, contrary to the original intention of his parents, instructed in the preparatory studies, and entered Columbia College, N. Y., in September, 1821. Here, greater facilities for improving himself in the various departments of literature and science were held out to him, than he had yet possessed, and it cannot be supposed, that a mind so eager in the pursuit of knowledge, and active in deriving it from every source, would permit these to pass neglected. With a settled and firm resolution rarely met with, he set himself against every occupation and pursuit that might in any way prevent application to study, and consequently retard improvement; and by a uniform adherence to this wise determination during his college course, he made rapid and substantial advances in those branches of knowledge to which his attention was directed, and in mathematical science in particular, to excel in which, he was peculiarly fitted by the natural bias and disposition of his mind. His moral character was a transcript of the purity of his heart. The principles of virtue and religion, at an early age, strongly inculcated upon his mind, took the deep hold upon his affections which they retained throughout the whole of his short career. Having stored his mind with useful and polite learning, and received the highest honors of the Institution of which he was a member, he graduated Bachelor of Arts, August 2d, 1825.

The profession upon which, after mature deliberation, he thought fit to decide, was that of the Law; and he had already completed his arrangements for commencing the study, when he became an attendant upon his sick parent, whose illness assumed an alarming aspect, and in a few days proved fatal. This duty he faithfully discharged, until he had imbibed the same dreadful malady,* and fell himself, its untimely victim. He was born at Hempstead, L. I., October 8th, 1804: and died September 23d, 1825, in the twenty-first year of his age. The sweetness of his disposition, the amiability of his deportment, the uprightness of his heart, won the esteem of all who knew him; and strengthened the ties of natural affection, by which numerous relatives were endeared to him. He has erected a monument to his own memory, in the breast of every surviving friend, which death itself will not destroy."

[NOTE B.]

After a very interesting conversation with the Rev. Prof. McVickar as to the life and character of Dr. Harris, I addressed him a note, requesting that he would do me the favor to embody what he then said in writing, and allow me to use it as a note to the address. In reply, I received the following letter :

Columbia College, June 12, 1840.

REV. AND DEAR SIR:

In answer to your inquiry, I have little to add to your faithful and well drawn sketch of *my* early friend, and *your* old president, the Rev. Dr. Harris. I knew him however well, and loved him much. For the last eleven years of his life, that is, from the date of my official connection with the College in 1817, I was in habits necessarily of close and daily intimacy with him, and saw in him much to awaken admiration, that the world around did not see, in his quiet unobtrusive walk and character.

As a college disciplinarian, he was marked by a singular union of extreme gentleness with firmness, amounting upon occasion, to high austerity. It was, in short, the discipline of a gentle but wise and watchful father, ever kind to his 'children,' as he at all times reputed and termed the students, but then sometimes stern in his kindness; above all, when any moral obliquity was to be noted in them, or want of sensibility to religious motives or duties. On such occasions, the severity of his rebuke and manner, not assumed, but springing out of the depth of his own awakened feelings, used to inspire awe

The Typhus Fever. The father died on Friday the 16th; the son on Friday the 23d of September; the daughter on Friday, October 7th, 1825.

not only into the heart of the culprit, but I remember well into that too of some of those who sat at the board with him. That a student, for instance, should exhibit want of reverence during the reading of the scriptures in the chapel, was in his eyes a deep offence to the College and to God, and he struck at it as at the very root of rebellion, contumacy, and neglect of duty ; for how, he argued, could one reverence the word of man, who did not reverence the word of God. On this point of founding the duties of the student *directly* on reverence to God, and appealing pointedly to their religious feelings as the ground of their obedience, Dr. Harris was perhaps somewhat peculiar in the principle : there is no doubt, he was very successful in practice. He found it, as it unquestionably is, the firmest rock on which education and its requisite discipline can be built.

Among the hidden talents of one, who, by the world, was far from being reputed a man of talents, I would mention a vein of poetic power, not often, but sometimes beautifully and touchingly exhibited ; and in proof of its being a vein of ‘true gold,’ would add, that it was never brought to light but by the deep workings of genuine feeling ; the blow it was, that brought forth the spark of fancy, and most frequently it was in the tones of sorrow.

On more than one occasion have I known him thus suddenly inspired, though but for a moment, to pour forth his agitated feelings in verse, by circumstances that in minds of another temperament would have called them forth in a far different strain. Once or twice, especially, I remember, on occasions when his feelings had been deeply wounded as they sometimes very unintentionally were, amid the sharper contests of opinion that took place in the board of trustees ; then have I known him to retire to his room, and find relief in giving words to his complaint in strains alike plaintive and poetic ; so deeply pious, so humble-minded, and so mournful, as at the time to remind me (in the spirit at least that dictated them) of the solitary plaints of ‘the sweet singer of Israel.’

Among the customs that accorded well with this pensive poetic strain, was his habit of passing a meditative half hour soon after day-light every fine morning, in walking around the College green. His venerable figure and musing gait at that solitary hour, as I occasionally saw him from my window under the noble trees that in age were just his contemporaries, slowly pacing back and forth, formed then on my fancy a striking, and as it has since proved, an abiding picture, as that of an overtired and gentle mind, seeking in quiet communion with nature, and the author of nature, peace, amid many sources of disquiet, and strength to arm, for its daily task of duty, a spirit not well fitted for the rougher encounters of the world.

Very truly, your friend and brother,

JOHN McVICKAR.





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